

Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair
3 East Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

SB 521
Supporting

Dear Chair Kelley, Vice Chair Feldman, and Members of the Finance Committee,

We Graduate Assistants of the University of Maryland system keep the gears of pedagogy and administration moving, performing valuable labor to impart wisdom, skills, and experience to undergraduate students and to assist administrators with the effective functioning of the department and the school. Teaching Assistants in particular perform the onerous task of maintaining the forward momentum of their own studies while devoting significant portions of their time every week, every month, every semester to providing a valuable learning experience to students, doing the hard work of implementing the academic strategies and imparting the intellectual content constructed and assembled by instructors of record. These efforts unflinching exceed the maximum average numbers of hours worked (20/week) deemed allowable by Graduate School policies.

Simply put, graduate employees perform vital labor for the University of Maryland and that labor must be recognized and rewarded at a level sufficient to allow for adequate living standards. The university and the state owe us that much for the valuable work we provide to make this current model of instruction function. That we are not treated as other state employees are treated and that budgets seem to put these decisions out of the hands of administrators are problems of political will. These things can be changed if we decide to do so, but our voice in that conversation has been and is limited. We are simply demanding fair representation of our collective political will and power in a negotiation for adequate compensation for our labor. Dismissals of our right to bargain collectively that rely on the 'good sense' of resolving issues on a 'one-on-one' basis reveal that those who make such arguments know precisely how this power dynamic functions and how it serves to maintain the existing state of affairs. We maintain that this is not the case, but our desire to change those affairs cannot find expression without the recognition of the political voice that our labor merits.

Sincerely,

JP Fetherston
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